POLAND RISING FROM CHAOS, ITS WOMEN HELPING

Sex Well Organized, Especially in the Cities, Where Keenest Interest Is Taken in Politics and Government Problems---Country People Still Backward, Including the Men

POLISH women and their future are discussed this week by Mrs. Borden Harriman in the seventh of her series of articles on the post-war conditions of women in Europe, now being published in The New York Herald Magazine. Active interest in politics and governmental problems, Mrs. Harriman finds, is displayed by women in the Polish cities. But in the country practically ante-war conditions prevail—even among the men—the people not realizing that they actually are free. On the whole, Mrs. Harriman's analysis of Polish conditions is encouraging.

By MRS. BORDEN HARRIMAN.

Special Correspondence to THE NEW YORK HERALD.

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AMERICAN RED CROSS PHOTO

Polish women do just as hard work as men, even to being section workers on the railroad. In oval below is a group of American Relief Administration workers.

THERE are many women in this mediæval and almost Oriental country who are organized and doing excellent work.

To Americans who think about Poland at all she is a small nation with a most romantic history, to whom, in her distress, America has sent relief of numerous kinds. But how many have realized that her women are eminent for their brains and ability?

That the Polish women have had the heart and energy to organize and accomplish anything is most surprising in the face of all the facts. For one hundred and fifty years three great countries did everything in their power to ruin these people for the task of self-government. Her present condition is the direct result of the decision by those three antagonistic influences, with a single objective: to use Poland for their own ends. She has been set aside from the normal course of progress. Her national development has been retarded, her resources have been left undeveloped, her ambitions thwarted.

Since 1914 numerous armies have swept across her territory. The Russians, the Prussians, the Austrians, the Bolsheviks, and finally the Polish army itself. For the armistice left the Poles with five different wars on their hands—a war on every frontier.

More than that—if the Poles have not been thoroughly disillusioned by what they believe were the broken promises of the representatives of the Great Powers, it is because they have a spirit that may be dimmed, but never wholly subdued.

Much Sympathy for Poles Because of Peace Terms

No matter what a person's opinion may be as to the relative rights of Poland and Germany, one must harbor a certain sympathy for the Poles in the throes of their national rebirth and their disappointed ambitions. Following the raising of their hopes by the Fourteen Points, came the prospects held out to them by the Peace Conference and never redeemed. Danzig, having been almost within their grasp, is now, they will tell you, camouflaged as "free"—but, in reality, in the control of Germany.

The duchy of Teschen in Austrian Silesia, which in spite of its small size is extremely valuable because of its coal and manufacturing industries, was long a bone of contention between Poland and Czecho-Slovakia. The Poles say that when Teschen was in their possession the Czechs attacked them and the Poles were requested by the Allies not to fight back. They didn't, and then Teschen was finally awarded to the Czechs. However, the situation of a divided city, which it was for a year owing to the decision of the Council of Ambassadors, was one which could not endure.

Teschen was cut in two, the larger eastern portion being Polish and the western, with the railway station, going to the Czechs. The Polish side had three hospitals and all the public schools, except one, that was on the Czech side. The latter had also all the churches, cemeteries and practically all public buildings. The gas works and water works and shopping district belonged to Poland.

A child going to school in Polish Teschen from the Czech side had to pass through four passport patrols on his way to and from his lessons, while his father, on the way to work and returning home, had to pass the same amount of official scrutiny. It was an untenable situation.

The Upper Silesian question is a bitter thorn in Poland's side. It seems no nearer a settlement to-day than six months ago. The plebiscite in March, as plebiscites have a way of doing, raised national animosities to a fever pitch, and, as far as Poland will concede, proved nothing.

Finally they do not consider that the so-called "Curzon line" is a fair boundary on the east, as it involves the renunciation by Poland of large areas in which the Poles claim there are majorities of Polish population.

Confused Internal Condition With a Score of Parties

The effect of it all has been, no matter how unreasonable, to make Poland feel herself hampered and tied up on all sides. They will tell you to-day that every man's hand is against them.

With this chaotic international situation goes naturally hand-in-hand a confused internal condition. There are about a score of political parties in Poland, representing all shades of social and religious differences. They may be classed under two general heads—"Nationalists and Socialists." Much of the rural population is Nationalist and Catholic. The Socialists have a majority in the cities, largely on account of the predominant Jewish vote, which is always registered in the industrial centres.

When, with Poland's independence, came universal suffrage the Socialists, or Left Wing, became at once very active with propaganda. They sent agents all over the country agitating for their cause.

To offset this the Nationalist women formed a Woman's National Political Union which began with 5,000 members.

It districted Warsaw much as Tammany does New York, and before election every house in every street, whether inhabited by the very rich or the very poor, was visited by a member of the union, who instructed the women how to use their vote. So conscientious is the new electorate about getting out their vote that women who have been bedridden for years are taken to the polls in wheeled chairs, and no one is considered ill enough, without a doctor's certificate, to be allowed to be a slacker.

Between elections this organization does very much the same kind of educational work as the Voters' League does in America. It tries to effect legislation, particularly that pertaining to women. There is a universal eight-hour day in Poland, but no minimum wage laws. The women in the factories are paid very much less than the men, and the union is just beginning to agitate for equal pay for equal work.

Seven women now sit in the Polish Diet, which was summoned to adopt a constitution. That being accomplished the Diet continued in session to pass laws. The legal processes are complicated by the fact that the present country has the laws that were bequeathed to it by the Prussians, Russians and Austrians, with the addition of the Napoleonic Code!

But the women did not wait for their emancipation to take an active interest in social questions. For fifteen years before the war there existed all through Poland a great organization of women known as the *Organizations des Dames Foncieres*. This was inaugurated by the women of the land-owning class, with the object of giving the rural population the benefits of education and social service.

In every district it has a committee, with ten local sub-committees, and its influence upon the progress of Polish women has been marked.

Much Handicapped in Work By Foreign Opposition

It must be remembered that with the foreign domination all efforts making for unity of Polish ideas were opposed by the various Governments. This made the task of the women to advance their influence and ideas very difficult.

The *Organizations des Dames Foncieres* to-day, in a free Poland, has taken on a new lease of life and its membership includes most of the women of the rural districts.

The same activity in the direction of education and mutual help is carried on in the industrial centres by the *Circle de la Travail des Femmes*.

This was created during the first days of the war upon the primary impulse of women to aid the women and children made helpless and destitute by the mobilization of the men. It also collected and cared for the many children found wandering and homeless in the invaded areas.

The difficulties of the initial organization at that time were great. In the Russian provinces the Government, on its withdrawal, took with it all the trained operators of the public service—those of the telephone and telegraph, and the personnel of the street car lines and railroads.

Besides their work in rescuing those left destitute by the war the *Circle de la Travail des Femmes* took up many outside activities. It was these women who cared for the wounded soldiers of the Russian army, for whom no provision had been made.

At present the work of this organization is directed toward the education of women and children in different trades, and it supports day nurseries, classes in sewing and dressmaking for girls and in manual training for boys.

The women of Poland are eager to work and are taking advantage of every opportunity given them to learn to support themselves.

While the industrial centres are subject to the varied forces of modern ideas, in rural Poland to-day there is preserved the picturesque life of the past.

The customs of the people are survivals of the ages of feudalism. There are some estates that rival in extent the great holdings of Texas and Mexico. Besides these enormous acreages the balance of the country is divided into smaller proprietary holdings, but few of the actual tillers of the soil owning their own land.

The industries of the great estates are by no means limited to agriculture, but include mines, factories and merchandising facilities of rivers and canals.

The peasants retain, almost intact, toward their landlords the allegiance and obligations of feudal days. There is generally a friendly acceptance of their mutual interests and dependence, and there is nothing of the class rivalry of the centres of population.

A visitor to a great country house, to whom this atmosphere is a novel one, is somewhat embarrassed by some of its manifestations. He is met by a far from modern acknowledgment of his status as a superior being—as in the kissing of his hand, by men and women alike, on all occasions.

In the remote agricultural regions in East Poland the life of the country people is archaic in its simplicity. Under Russian domination there was little or no education or progressive change in any direction. To-day the peasants continue to live as did their forefathers, with little difference in their customs and interests from those of the Middle Ages.

Women Have Equal Share With Men in Day's Work

The women of these rural districts are sturdy and industrious workers, having an equal share with the men in the life of the community and a dominant influence over the younger generation. In old age they are the repositories of the simple history of their times and the legendary tales of the country-side.

The shrewd intelligence and industry of the Polish peasant woman is proverbial. It is toward this almost untouched reservoir of feminine potentiality that the progressive women of Poland hope to direct the flow of education and organization.

Warsaw to-day is a bisection of the composite elements of the country. It is kaleidoscopic in its color and movement. Sturdy peasants, soldiers in every sort of uniform, Jews in their soiled black gowns and round caps, smart looking officers, beggars of an Oriental destitution—jostling each other in the picturesque streets.

Occasionally a detachment of Bolshevist prisoners of war goes by under guard. They are rugged looking boys, wearing red tunics which have a curious history. They were part of the uniforms of the first Canadian army to arrive in Europe after the outbreak of the great war. The bright scarlet was considered impractical for field service and was discarded for a khaki substitute.

When Deniken's army was in dire need of supplies the tunics were sent to Russia for his soldiers, and when the Bolshevists captured his army they took the Canadian tunics and wore them. They, in turn, being captured by the Poles, the scarlet coats with the maple leaf insignia are now part of the pageant of Warsaw.

The city, like most cities of Central Europe, is to-day enormously over populated. There is comfortable accommodation for about 800,000 in Warsaw, and at present there are 1,800,000 in the city. Living quarters are almost impossible to find and all houses have been requisitioned by the Government.

No family can occupy more than one room for each of its members. All space outside of that allowance must be available for occupancy by those billeted there by the authorities.

Warsaw is one of the outposts of western security against the shifting horror that is the Russian famine. Already the shadow of that nightmare has fallen across the Polish frontiers. As one goes east from Warsaw there grows more distinct with every mile the sense of impending catastrophe. Poland, still gasping for its first breaths of national existence, must soon withstand the impact of an incalculable desolation which is drifting toward its borders. Every day the reports of the famine grow, and every day those who hope that the accounts may have been inflated are forced to admit that the truth is worse than any exaggeration.

Northeast of Brest-Litovsk, on the Russian border, lies Baranowice Camp, through which Russian and Polish prisoners of war and refugees are being returned to their respective countries. It is estimated that there are 30,000 Russian soldiers still in Poland, and about 12,000 Poles still prisoners of war in Russia. Baranowice is one of several camps on the Polish frontier where these military exchanges take place, and where the constantly increasing stream of civilian refugees is becoming a great problem.

Returning from their temporary home in Russia, the Polish refugees bring appalling accounts of the famine. For two years back, they say, the crops have failed, and this year there is nothing to harvest.

Fifty thousand of these destitute people went through Baranowice Camp during July. They are fed, disinfected and provided with free tickets to a point on the railroad nearest their old homes. In the woods and fields near the camp are wooden huts which accommodate about 4,000, but recently, as the numbers of refugees increased, there have sometimes been as many as 20,000 homeless people seeking shelter in and about the camp.

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In oval above is Hugh Gibson, United States Minister to Poland. The woman with the cart is delivering milk, while the three others pictured are peasants who have brought produce to the Cracow market

Under such circumstances the feeding, delousing and disinfecting facilities have been strained to the breaking point. Not more than a month ago, under an unforeseen pressure of numbers, about 8,000 refugees moved over the Polish border without being disinfected.

This influx of misery on her frontiers is a serious menace to Poland. Her own crops have been below normal this year on account of the drought—and can she allow her land to be overrun by the famished hordes from Russia? Famine and pestilence walk hand in hand, and one of her most serious problems is to prevent the spread of typhus and other diseases by refugees.

Among the swamps and pine woods of the Brest-Litovsk region is an advance station of the Quaker relief work. Here are two women workers who cooperate with the American Relief Administration, and who have under their care almost twenty villages. They provide food for the undernourished children and supply the returning homeseekers with tools and seeds at a low price. The Polish Government gives a grant of standing timber to each family, with which to build a home, and gradually throughout this zone of Quaker relief work little houses are going up and land is being brought under cultivation, and conditions are generally improving.

On the other hand, one of the sights of Warsaw is the feeding station of the Russian relief, where the many destitute Russian refugees are given their one meal a day. There is no incident more pathetic or significant in all the conglomerate life of this picturesque capital—where the fatalism of the Orient meets the progressive spirit of western Europe.

Great Work Being Done By American Legation

In this fascinating setting of color and dirt and the drama of an ancient people stands the American Legation.

"The Blue Palace," as the home of the legation is called, is rich in an atmosphere of past history and culture. Since 1919 history of a greater import has been making beneath its roof. Here, as doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, Mr. Hugh Gibson works early and late. Representatives of all countries and classes gather around the legation table, and many a misunderstanding is averted by the opportunity given to each and all to discuss complicated matters in an informal way. The United States is happy in having at this time such a man as Minister to Poland. He is brilliant, tactful and democratic. The Poles realize their good fortune and show their appreciation in every possible way.

Poland, as a nation, has long been credited with an idealistic but impractical temperament. Her problems of to-day call for a steady head and a strong hand. In their solution, under such tremendous difficulties, she will prove beyond dispute the worth of her national character.

To solidify her varied elements and to achieve the essentials of her nationalistic aims, while her frontiers face chaos on the one hand and antagonism on the other, is a task that will demand all that she has of common sense and self-restraint.

Acts of Discipline Show That Animals Think

IT is interesting to know that certain animals are governed by what appear to be almost military regulations. Among animals only the gregarious, of course, show qualities of leadership and discipline.

Wild horses obey their leader more implicitly than any soldiers, however well satisfied. Mustangs are wary, difficult to approach and almost impossible to capture owing to the devotion with which they follow their leader and to a code of signals that they never disregard. A short, shrill neigh is the command to flee; a long drawn, far carrying neigh is the rallying call when the herd is scattered; a squeal orders the stallions to stand ready to fight off dangerous beasts, and a wild snort indicates the sight or scent of man. The snort of a mustang can be heard half a mile.

Certain movements are also important as signals. At the first hint of danger the horse that detects it throws his head and tail high in the air, stands motionless and gazes fixedly in the direction from which he anticipates trouble. Usually that is enough to put the entire drove on the alert. Should the enemy prove to be bears, wolves or any foe against which the horse can defend itself the "signal horse" dashes forward, prancing from side to side, rearing and striking the ground.

Should their most dreaded enemy, man, be approaching the horse will circle far in toward the main body, and as he turns for one last look he will snort out a trumpet-like blast. Then with a rush, a roar and a clatter of hoofs the entire drove is gone—the leader in front, the stallions in the rear, the colts in the middle.

Even old, well trained work horses when turned out to pasture will generally select a leader and be governed by him. The drove commander may be an old and gentle mare or the wildest and wariest. In the latter case the herd often becomes almost as difficult to handle as so many wild horses, whereas the old mare will keep her drove in the most tractable condition.

The peccaries of Mexico have a battle cry that is never disobeyed—a short, vicious squeal, quickly repeated. That noise drives the little beasts frantic; all within hearing rush to get into the fray, and nothing short of death stops their charge. If the hunter does not shoot his peccary so that it cannot emit a single dying squeal his only safety lies in instant flight.

The peccary has also a note that sounds the retreat. It is a grunt something like the "Woof! Woof! Woof!" of a bear as he dashes away from danger. An American guide who lives in Sonora, Mexico, can imitate that note and says that he can stampede a pack of the brutes at will with it.

The baboons of Africa have probably what are the best military regulations of any of the animals. While they are feeding in a dangerous place they set sentries on every side—big, wise, veteran baboons that sit perfectly quiet and keep a vigilant watch. At a sharp bark of warning from one of these outposts every ape ceases his occupation; even the babies hush their cries.

At another bark all may resume work or play; or, again, the second note may carry a different message; then the leader gives an order and all retreat rapidly to the denser parts of the forest.

When travelling these creatures have both a front and a rear guard. A half dozen powerful apes scout well in front of the main body, now inspecting the woods from the ground, now climbing to the tops of the tallest trees.

If the traveller comes on a tribe of baboons he usually sees only one of the scouts, which bares his teeth savagely, barks once and is gone. Further away the hunter may observe the whipping of branches as the rest of the tribe retreat so rapidly that no man can overtake them. Should the observer happen upon the rear guard he will notice that they behave differently from the scouts. Not silent or cautious, they constantly give quick, sharp commands, now angrily chiding some lagging youngster or giving another a slap and a bite.

As far as we know, the baboons are the only apes or other animals that post a sentry at night. Commonly they sleep in caves among the cliffs, and when all have retired you may be sure that one of their number will be wide awake, sitting on some exposed rock or other point of vantage.

Not even the leopard, the most determined foe of the baboon, dares to attack them at night unless he can kill the sentry.